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Nathan Deal
Congress of the United States

December 22, 2009

Committee on
Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Health
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Communications, Technology,
and the Internet
Subcommittee on
Oversight and Investigations

Mr. Julius Genachowski, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, D. C. 20554

2102

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I am writing on behalf of the citizens of Georgia's Ninth Congressional District, whom may be profoundly impacted by the outcome of negotiations between Mediacom Communications Corporation and Sinclair Broadcasting Group over retransmission consent rights for broadcast stations serving our state. Sinclair owned WTWC-NBC, originates in Tallahassee and is carried by Mediacom in the Valdosta/Thomasville cable market area.

As you may be aware, failure to reach a related compromise in early 2007 resulted in 700,000 Mediacom customers in 12 states losing access to 22 broadcast television stations controlled by Sinclair. During the four week impasse, the nearly two million people residing in those households were unable to view many of their favorite network programs, NFL playoff games, the BCS National Championship Game, college basketball games and local news and weather reports.

During the last dispute between Mediacom and Sinclair, many of our constituents were able to utilize rabbit ear antennas to pick up the analog over-the-air broadcasts of the Sinclair stations. As a result of the Digital TV Transition earlier this year, these Sinclair stations now only broadcast in a digital format. Many of our citizens, particularly the elderly and low-income populations, rely on Mediacom to convert Sinclair's digital broadcast signals to analog so they can continue using their older analog only televisions. Given the expense of upgrading to a digital television or purchasing a digital to analog converter, it is unlikely that receiving the Sinclair stations over-the-air would be a realistic option for many of the impacted households this time around.

Our citizens have come to depend on these stations for news and entertainment. On behalf of my constituents, the customers of Mediacom and the viewers of the Sinclair stations, we write to you today asking that the FCC do everything in its power to ensure that a disruption in service does not occur again. In the event that Mediacom and Sinclair are unable to come to terms on a retransmission consent agreement, we request that, above all else, the FCC take action to protect the public interest.

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At a minimum, the FCC should authorize interim carriage of the stations while the parties sort out their differences before the Commission. In the alternative, the FCC should consider ordering that the parties submit to binding arbitration if no arms length agreement can be reached. The interests of the public must come first. To that end, we believe it is imperative that the FCC use its authority to prevent any interruption in broadcast service during this round of negotiations between the parties. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nathan Deal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nathan Deal



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

March 5, 2010

The Honorable Nathan Deal
U.S. House of Representatives
2133 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Deal:

Thank you for your letter concerning the retransmission negotiations, in particular the negotiations involving carriage of local broadcast television stations owned or operated by Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc., on cable television systems operated by Mediacom Communications Corporation.

I welcomed the announcement on January 7, 2010, that Sinclair and Mediacom had reached a retransmission consent agreement governing the carriage of local broadcast television stations owned or operated by Sinclair. I have been informed that the one-year agreement authorizes the continued carriage of the signals of 22 television stations owned or operated by Sinclair in 15 television markets to more than 600,000 Mediacom subscribers. The agreement also provided that Mediacom would withdraw the retransmission consent complaint that it had filed with the Commission, which now has occurred. Most important, I was pleased that the parties chose to continue program carriage under interim agreements, and that consumers were not impacted as final negotiations were underway. Similarly, Time Warner Cable and Fox – also facing a year-end deadline – were able to conclude a retransmission consent agreement without any disruption of service to consumers.

Please be assured that the Commission will continue to monitor issues related to retransmission consent negotiations between broadcasters and MVPDs, and remains prepared to implement the Communications Act and its good faith rules when a broadcaster or MVPD files a retransmission consent complaint.

I appreciate the opportunity to learn of your concerns about this important matter. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Julius Genachowski